



Necessity by daughtersofthesun

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Summary: "When she hears the tap at her window, she jumps. Only the outline of a figure is visible staring into her bedroom from the darkness. Male, broad shoulders, a jacket, and long, shaggy hair." Jancy. Post-finale. One-shot ft. the kiss we deserved but didn't receive.

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When she hears the tap at her window, she jumps.

Not because she's been extra jumpy lately, which she has. I mean, who wouldn't be? When you've seen the things Nancy Wheeler has seen, you don't come out fully unscathed. You don't come out as the same person you were before you went in.

Ever since the... demogorgon, Mike and his friends call it... was killed, things have been different around the house. Easier. Anything would seem easier in comparison, though. She's physically fought a demon alien humanoid from another dimension. Ordinary adolescent struggles – dating, driving, trigonometry, being friends with her little brother, talking to her parents – all of it seems unchallenging and doable now. Steve comes in through the front door and he and Nancy sit in the den or the dining room with the rest of the family. They only go upstairs to do homework, and in the event that they do, the light remains on and the door remains open. Steve leaves at nine on school nights and ten-thirty on weekends. They are allowed to sit on the front porch together alone, and that is where they share their goodnight kisses.

Which is why a polite rapping on her second-story bedroom window at half past nine o'clock on a Sunday evening makes her jump.

Because the light is still on, only the outline of a figure is visible staring into her bedroom from the darkness outside. Male, broad shoulders, a jacket, and long, shaggy hair. A figure that is not that of her boyfriend, but that of another. Her eyes dart to the bedroom door which is shut tight. She looks back to the window once more before

going to the door and locking it.

She lifts the window just enough. Not enough for him to enter the room, but enough to see his face.

"Jonathan? What are you doing?" she asks, careful to keep her voice down and prompting him to do the same.

"Hey, uh. I was driving by and I... saw your light on."

"Oh." She says this as though it is a perfectly adequate and reasonable explanation for why he'd climbed the side of her house and pulled himself up onto the first story roof. She wonders if he knows that this was how Steve used to visit her, but she decides it doesn't matter. "Do you want to come in?"

He nods. She lifts the window up the remaining inches and steps back while he climbs in. He dusts off the front of his jacket and looks around the room silently as if he is noting any changes made since the last time he was here. There aren't any.

"So, you said you were driving by?" Nancy asks, her nerves suddenly on edge because Jonathan Byers is standing in her bedroom. He's stood here before – he's laid next to her in her bed before! – so she feels stupid for even feeling nervous. But things have been different between them since everything that happened. And there's no questioning that. She folds an arm around her chest in attempt to trap the nerves there and wraps her fingers around her other arm protectively – trying to protect herself from these feelings she feels... or maybe she's trying to protect him from noticing them.

"Yeah, that was a lie," he says with an equally nervous-sounding chuckle. "I mean, I did drive here—" he gestures behind him to the window as if she could see through the wall and to his car parked on the street outside her house.

An uncomfortable tickle rises in her throat. She clears it quickly. "So, why are you here, then?"

He shrugs, scratches the back of his head, doesn't make eye contact. "I guess I just wanted to thank you for the camera."

She grins, at once at ease. This is her friend Jonathan. She knows this boy – she literally fought a monster straight out of a real-life horror movie alongside this boy. "You already did. You called. Remember?"

"I wanted to thank you again, I mean." He grins, too. He can't help it. "In person, I mean."

"Oh, okay." She gestures behind her to her bedroom door as if he could see through the wall and down the stairs and into the living room and to the front door. "You could've come to the door, you know," she laughs. "Like a normal person?"

He laughs back. "Yeah, I don't know. I guess I kind of forgot what normal is now. After everything."

"Please, Jonathan," she scoffs. "You didn't know what normal was even before we were attacked by a hellion creature." Maybe talking about it in a comical way will help ease some of the tension that the memory of it inevitably brings along with it. She releases her hold on her arm to lightly shove his.

He steps backward from the impact and laughs again. He has such a lovely laugh, she thinks. She very rarely heard it before. It's so soft and gentle, just like him.

The silence becomes thick and awkward as they stare at each other, small half-grins still present on their faces. Neither of them wants to face the elephant in the room, what she had been hopeful was perhaps the real driving force behind his unplanned visit. Maybe, she'd hoped, Jonathan had come to say all the things that had gone unsaid between them over the past few months and challenge her to do the same. But she knows the truth behind what's holding them back, and that is that neither wants to lose this innocent and fun friendship they've managed to salvage from the wreckage of The Upside Down. Neither wants to ruin it. So perhaps they will not speak of the elephant at all. Perhaps that is for the best.

"I've been using it a lot. The camera," he speaks. "It's really nice."

"Steve picked it out, actually," Nancy says, making an empty gesture. She pretends she doesn't see Jonathan wince at the mention of her

boyfriend. "It was partly my idea, too," she's quick to explain, "but he picked it out and then I borrowed some money from Dad."

"Well, I'll have to thank both of them," Jonathan promises. "It really is nice. Nicer than my other one, even. I, uh, I like it a lot."

"Good. I'm glad."

The silence creeps back in again and both pairs of eyes avert from each others' unwillingly, yet out of what feels like a forced necessity. Forced for the sake of the absent third party of this interaction.

"He's really not a bad guy, you know," she says quietly, eyes to the floor, for the sake of the absent third party.

"I know."

"I mean, he did some really crappy things..."

"I know."

"But he came back, and he apologized, and he made it right!" she insists, although no one is disputing that fact. "He was a real gentleman about it."

"I know."

"And my parents, they really like him, too," she adds, reaching, her words coming out quickly and close together. "And so does Mike now, I think."

"I bet." He nods, using the motion to cover up the fact that he's taken a step closer to her. "That's good."

"And we're doing really well."

"Yeah?"

Her voice heightens in pitch as she continues to unnecessarily explain herself. "And I think it's really good that we're back together. You know? We're good for each other."

"Uh-huh."

"Jonathan?" she squeaks out. She looks up at him slowly, nervously. She wishes he would be braver. Things were supposed to be easier now, in comparison.

"Yeah?"

"Wh-why did you *really* come here?"

He blinks once. His voice is level. "I told you. To thank you."

She nods, her ego shriveling up inside of her. "You should probably get going, then," she suggests, eyes downcast.

They stay still for a moment or two before he replies. "Yeah. Okay." He turns to the window, and she doesn't protest. He stands there, at the window, facing it. He doesn't yet make a move to go through it; it seems as though he is waiting for her to object. She doesn't. "See you at school," he calls quietly. He goes through the window.

Nancy hears the faint *thump* of his feet hitting the ground.

His name forms itself on her lips, but she makes no sound. An anxious bubble rises in her stomach and up to her throat. She runs to the window and sticks her head out, then her entire upper body. "Jonathan?!" she calls out, almost a screech. She can't see him, but she hasn't heard the starting of a car engine yet. She bounds to her bedroom door, attempting to pry it open before realizing it's still locked. Her fingers fumble with the lock in the knob and then she's twisting it open and running out of it and taking the steps two at a time, adrenaline rushing through her in waves and fueling her steps. Everyone is in bed except for her father who has fallen asleep in the recliner, an infomercial buzzing on the television, background noise.

She runs through the front door and down the driveway and out to the street... but she's too late. His car is gone. He's gone.

What was she planning to say to him anyway? Why did she run after him so foolishly? What did she feel was so important, so dire, so detrimental, that she maniacally chased after him like so? She doesn't have an answer.

Dejected, Nancy trudges back up the stairs – quietly, this time – and back into her room.

And there he is, seated at the extreme edge of her bed, his left leg bouncing up and down impatiently.

"Nancy?!"

"Jonathan?"

Her runs to her, reaches out to her, but he doesn't touch her. His expression is crazed, his brows drawn together, his eyes wide. "Nancy, are you okay?!"

Flashbacks swim into her conscious, dark and cold but somehow humid and muggy at the same time, floating particles of dust or moss, breathing it in and choking on the thick pollution. "Yes, I'm fine..."

"Oh, thank God." He pulls her to him in a tight embrace, not even trying to disguise it. "I heard you call out... I thought... I thought..."

Sharp claws, row and rows and rows of pointed teeth, the gray "*man*" without a face, the animalistic predator. She wraps her arms around his waist and hugs him back. "I'm so sorry, Jonathan. I didn't mean to... I'm fine," she assures him, her voice a comforting mezzo piano. "I'm fine."

They pull apart slowly, neither wanting to let go of the other. Jonathan's expression has relaxed only somewhat. The proximity has a certain electricity buzzing between them like the pulling of two magnets and she fears that a different sort of fear altogether has now plagued him as it does her.

"I, uh, I thought you said you drove here?" she says quietly. She can hear her heartbeat over the words.

"I parked down the street," he answers even quieter, his lips barely moving. "Walked here. Didn't wanna get you in trouble."

She swallows audibly. "That was nice of you. Thank you."

"You're welcome," he answers, positively a whisper.

She stares into his eyes, a simple question of what is going to happen next. "Jonathan?"

It happens so quickly that she can't be sure who moved first, although she believes that they both had at the same time. His lips press to hers firmly and hers close around his urgently. He pulls her tightly as he had before and then even tighter still. Their lips part and then meet again like their being connected is a necessity, her arms wrap around his neck and her fingers climb into his hair. He squeezes her waist and his hands brush over her slight frame and the planes and curvature of her hips, back, and waist again. The kiss seems to last forever; it grows deeper and heavier and soon they're panting and tugging and it becomes necessary for them to pull apart to breathe.

"I'm in love with you, Nancy," Jonathan whispers into the small space between them, his breath sweeping across her face.

She nods. She knows what she has to do now. She must break a heart. But she knows it is necessary. She thinks she catches a small hint of sadness in Jonathan's eyes, too, as if he is reading her mind. Steve does not deserve what they have just done to him.

But after all they've been through, do *they* not deserve the comfort found in each others' arms? Do they not deserve this warmth coursing through their veins? Do they not deserve to be able to take out their confusions and sadness and angst on each other this way? To grow? To mend? To heal? And to be healed?

"He's really not a bad guy," she sighs.

"I know."